

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

published in accordance with Art. 158(3) EPC

(43) Date of publication:
30.08.2000 Bulletin 2000/35

(51) Int. Cl.⁷: B41J 2/175

(21) Application number: 99943325.3

(86) International application number:
PCT/JP99/05002

(22) Date of filing: 13.09.1999

(87) International publication number:
WO 00/15441 (23.03.2000 Gazette 2000/12)

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE CH CY DE DK ES FI FR GB GR IE IT LI LU
MC NL PT SE

(72) Inventor: SHINADA, Satoshi
Suwa-shi, Nagano 392-8502 (JP)

(30) Priority: 14.09.1998 JP 26005298

(74) Representative: HOFFMANN - EITLE
Patent- und Rechtsanwälte
Arabellastrasse 4
81925 München (DE)

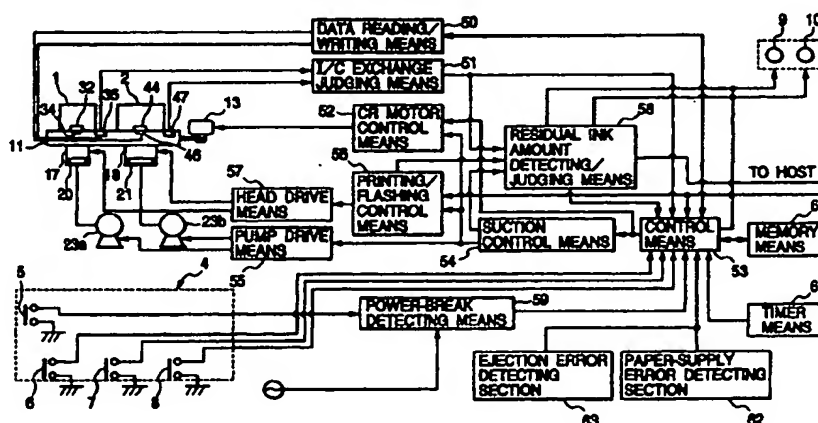
(71) Applicant:
SEIKO EPSON CORPORATION
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 163-0811 (JP)

(54) INK CARTRIDGE AND RECORDER

(57) A recorder comprises an ink cartridge for enabling the recorder to read, write, and rewrite information stored in storage means of the ink cartridge and for notifying the user of information on the recorder by means of the information stored in the storage means when the recorder fails and control means for reading, writing,

and rewriting information stored in the storage means. When a failure such as defective printing occurs in the recorder, information is given to the user by using the information stored in the storage means.

FIG. 4



Description

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] The present invention relates to an ink cartridge capable of supplying ink to printing means of an ink jet recording apparatus such as an ink jet printer, and its recording apparatus.

BACKGROUND ART

[0002] This type of a conventional printing apparatus has been disclosed in, for example, JP-A-8-248839 (known example). The summary of this apparatus is that a component exchangeably mounted to the printing apparatus are provided with a memory of which data can be read, written, and rewritten by the printing apparatus.

[0003] In the known example, a recording method is changed based on data from the memory so as to effectively perform a printing operation.

[0004] However, in this known example, the data of the memory is utilized solely for the purpose of changing the recording method.

[0005] A first problem that the invention is to solve is to provide what can judge availability of an ink cartridge and compatibility thereof to the recording apparatus based on data of memory means provided to the ink cartridge and notify a user of them.

[0006] A second problem that the invention is to solve is to provide what can rapidly remove a cause of abnormal state such as print error in the recording apparatus.

[0007] A third problem that the invention is to solve is to provide what causes a user to precisely know a stable using state of the ink cartridge, a stable using state between the ink cartridge and the recording apparatus, etc. and to suitably adopt them.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008]

Fig. 1 is a diagram showing one embodiment of an ink jet recording apparatus of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a diagram showing one embodiment of a recording mechanism of the ink jet recording apparatus of the invention.

Figs. 3A and 3B are diagrams each showing one embodiment of an ink cartridge used in the ink jet recording apparatus of the invention.

Fig. 4 is a constitutional view showing one embodiment of the ink jet recording apparatus of the invention.

Figs. 5 and 6 are flowcharts according to a first aspect of the invention.

[0009] The detail of the invention will be described below based on the shown embodiment.

[0010] Fig. 1 shows one embodiment of an ink jet recording apparatus of the invention, in which ink cartridges 1 and 2 for supplying ink to a recording head are stored within a case 3.

[0011] On an exposed surface of the case 3, an operation panel 4 is provided, on which there are arranged a power switch 5, an ink cartridge exchanging instruction-switch 6, a black head cleaning instruction-switch 7, a color head cleaning instruction-switch 8, and displays 9, 10 such as LEDs that are turned on and off or turned on when ink in a black cartridge and a color ink cartridge ends or an error occurs.

[0012] Fig. 2 shows a summary of the printing mechanism. A carriage 11 is connected to a carriage driving motor 13 through a timing belt 12 and constructed so as to reciprocate in parallel with a platen 15 while being guided by a guide member 14. In the carriage 11, a recording head 17 which ejects black ink is fixed on a printing region side (in the figure, on the left side) of its surface opposite to a recording sheet 16, and a recording head 18 which ejects a color ink is fixed on a non-printing region side (in the figure, on the right side) of the same.

[0013] A capping unit 19 disposed at the non-printing region is provided with a slider on which a cap 20 for sealing the black ink recording head 17 and a cap 21 for sealing the color ink recording head 18 are mounted, and each of the caps is connected through a tube to a duplex pump unit 23 which is driven by a motor 22, and constructed so as to individually receive supply of a negative pressure.

[0014] Each of the caps 20 and 21 is formed in the shape of a cup made of elastic material such as rubber having a size with which the nozzle opening surface of the associated recording head 17, 18 can be sealed by one space. These caps 20 and 21 are so designed that they can seal the nozzle opening surfaces of the recording heads 17 and 18 at the non-printing time and can cause the recording heads 17 and 18 to forcibly eject ink by the negative pressure from the pump unit 23 at the time of a recovery operation of ejecting capacity or at the time of exchange of the ink cartridges 7 and 8. Further, in the vicinity of the capping unit 19, a cleaning unit 24 is disposed, which brings a wiping blade into contact with the nozzle opening surfaces of the recording heads 17 and 18 by power from a driving source (not shown).

[0015] Figs. 3A and 3B show one embodiment of the black ink cartridge 1 and one embodiment of the color ink cartridge 2, respectively. The black ink cartridge 1 has, on a surface thereof opposite to the carriage 11 when it is mounted on the carriage 11, in this embodiment, on a bottom surface 30 thereof, an ink supply port 31 connectable to an ink guide passage of the recording head 17, and memory means 32, such as

EEPROM that is a rewritable nonvolatile memory.

[0016] The color ink cartridge 2 is divided into a plurality of rooms that store individually a plurality of color ink therein. On a bottom surface 40 of the color ink cartridge 2, there are provided ink supply ports 41, 42 and 43 which are communicated with respective ink chambers and can be connected to the ink guide passage of the recording head 18, and also memory means 44, such as EEPROM that is a rewritable nonvolatile memory.

[0017] These memory means 32 and 44 provided for the ink cartridges 1 and 2 are mounted on substrates 27 and 28, and connected to control means 53 to be described later through contacts 33 and 45 connected to said memory means 32 and 44 by contacts 34 and 46 formed at the carriage, so that data stored in these memory means 32 and 44 are read or data of the memory means in a main body of the recording apparatus is written.

[0018] Each memory means of the ink cartridges of the invention has at least the following data relating to the ink cartridge. As a data storage mode, data is stored with a data format that can be recognized by the recording apparatus main body or by a host computer connected to the recording apparatus.

(a) Kind of data

[0019] Kind (type number) of ink cartridge

(b) Recovery data

[0020] Data at the time of the preceding recovery operation

(c) Manufacturing data

[0021] At least data of year and month when the ink cartridge has been manufactured is stored, and also data of date and time when the ink cartridge has been manufactured can be stored.

(d) Mounting data

[0022] Data of at least year and month when the ink cartridge has been mounted

(e) Destination data

[0023] Destination data such as corresponding areas or corresponding countries of the ink cartridge

[0024] Fig. 4 shows one embodiment of a controlling device of the recording apparatus. The control device is so designed that in a state where the contacts 34 and 46 of the carriage 11 are connected to the contacts 33 and 45 of the ink cartridges 1 and 2, data reading and writing means 50 read the data in the memory means 32 and 44 of the ink cartridges 1 and 2 or write

the data of the memory means provided for a recording device to be described later into the memory means 32 and 44 of the ink cartridges 1 and 2.

[0025] Ink cartridge exchange judging means 51 receives signals from switches 35 and 47 that are located at positions of the carriage 11 opposite to the ink cartridges 1 and 2, in this embodiment on a cartridge receiving surface of the carriage 11, and that are push-operated by the ink cartridges 1 and 2, to thereby detect attachment and detachment of the ink cartridges 1 and 2.

[0026] Upon reception of control from the controlling means 53, carriage motor controlling means 52 causes the carriage 11 to reciprocate for printing and also causes the recording heads 17 and 18 to move to positions where the recording heads 17 and 18 can be capped at the time of the ejection recovering operation.

[0027] Upon reception of control from the controlling means 53, suction controlling means 54 causes the recording heads 17 and 18 to be sealed by the capping unit 19, and causes pump driving means 55 to control suction force of each suction pump 23a, 23b and suction time thereof thereby to forcibly eject ink from the recording heads 17 and 18 for the purpose of recovery of ink ejecting capacity. Further, when the ink cartridges 1 and 2 are exchanged, the suction controlling means 54 fills ink into the recording heads 17 and 18 from the ink cartridges 1 and 2 so that the printing operation can be performed.

[0028] Printing/flashing control means 56 causes head driving means 57 to output driving signals for ejecting ink droplets to each of the recording heads 17 and 18 based on the print data from the host, thereby to execute printing. Further, when each of recording heads 17 and 18 is located at a flashing position (for example, a position opposite to the cap), the means 56 causes the ink droplets to be ejected from all of nozzle openings by outputting the similar driving signals as the aforesaid signals, so that the viscosity-increased ink is ejected to the cap serving as an ink reception member.

[0029] Residual ink amount detecting means 58 adds up the number of dots formed by the printing operation, the number of the ink droplets ejected by the flashing operation, and the amount of ink consumed by the filling operation and the cleaning operation to calculate the amount of the residual ink in the ink cartridges 1 and 2.

[0030] Power-break detecting means 59 detects on/off of the power switch 5 and outputs signals indicative of that state. Further, when a power-off operation is performed, after the predetermined following operations have been executed, the means 59 stops power-supply to the apparatus.

[0031] The control means 53 receives signals from the ink cartridge exchanging instruction-switch 6 of the panel 4, the cleaning instruction switches 7 and 8 of the panel 4, the power-break detecting means 59, the residual ink amount detecting means 58 and the host, and

generalizes operations, such as a power-on operation, a power-off operation, a cleaning operation, a residual ink amount checking operation, a printing operation and an ink cartridge exchanging operation. Further, the control means 53 stores, in the memory means 63, various statuses associated with the exchange of the ink cartridge at the time of the power-off operation. Moreover, the control means 53 receives signals from a paper-supply error detecting section 62 for detecting paper-supply error such as paper-jam, and an ejection error detecting section 63 for detecting ejection error of ink droplets, and performs an error displaying operation.

[0032] This ink cartridge 1, 2 and the recording apparatus aim to continue the high quality recording operation of a high quality by supplying the optimum ink from the ink cartridge 1, 2 mounted in the recording apparatus to the recording apparatus, and are featured in that, when a problem such as the print error occurs, the recording apparatus reads data of the recording means 32, 44 of the ink cartridge 1, 2, and informs an operator of a main cause of the problem to promote the execution of the corresponding countermeasures.

[0033] Next, operations of this ink cartridge and recording apparatus will be described with reference to flowcharts shown in Figs. 5 and 6.

[0034] The ink cartridges 1, 2 are mounted on the carriage 11 serving as a mounting portion of the recording apparatus, and the ink supplying portions 31, 41, 42, 43 are communicated with the recording heads 17, 18 to enter a stand-by state for ink supply (S1).

[0035] In this state, the memory means 32, 44 are connected to respective contact portions 34, 46 of the recording apparatus so that the kind data (c) of the data stored in the memory means 32, 44 is read-out by the data reading and writing means 50, and compared by the control means 53 with the designated ink cartridge data retrieved from the memory means 60, whereby compatibility of the ink cartridges 1, 2 to the recording apparatus is judged (S2). If the ink cartridge 1, 2 is not compatible to the recording apparatus, the incompatibility is displayed in the displays 9, 10 to give an alarm to the operator (S3), and a starting operation of the recording apparatus is restrained (S4).

[0036] If it is judged that the ink cartridge 1, 2 is compatible to the recording apparatus, the date data is recorded in the memory means 60 (S5), and when a recording instruction is given by operation means (not shown), ink supplied from ink storage portion of the ink cartridge 1, 2 is supplied from the ink supplying portion to the recording head portion, whereby the desired recording operation is executed (S6).

[0037] Next, when the operator requires the recovery operation of the recording head according to the necessity as the recording operation processes (S7), the recording apparatus records, in the memory means 60, time point at which the recovery operation such as a suction operation for sucking ink from the recording head has been performed (S8).

[0038] After the recording operation has been thus executed suitably, the control section 53 calculates elapsed time based on time data of a timer means 61 and the recovery operation time point data of the memory means 60, and compares the elapsed time with standard recovery interval data of the memory means 60 (S9). In case that a predetermined time elapses, a normal recovery operation (S10) is executed, while in case that the predetermined time does not elapse, the data reading and writing means 50 reads out data of the manufacturing date from the memory means 32, 44 and retrieves data of an effective period of use from the memory means 60 so that the control section 53 judges whether the effective period of use has been passed (S11). If passed, the display sections 9, 10 display the passing of the effective period of use (S12), and then the procedure proceeds to step S13.

[0039] Sequentially, mounting data is retrieved from the memory means 60 and compared with time point data of the timer 61 by the control section 53 (S13).

[0040] As a consequence of this comparison, if the time elapsed from the mounting date exceeds the effective period of use, the display sections 9, 10 display similarly the passing of the effective period of use (S14) and then the procedure proceeds to a step S15.

[0041] Next, destination data corresponding to this ink cartridge 1, 2 is read out by the data reading and writing means 50 from the memory means 32, 44, and compared with the designated ink cartridge data of the recording means 60 by the control section 53 (S15). In case that the destination data is not compatible to the designated ink cartridge data, the display sections 9, 10 display the incompatibility (S16).

[0042] Then, the recovery operation for abnormal state is executed (S17), and the procedure returns to the recording operation (S6).

[0043] All of the elapsed time data confirmed by the recording apparatus (S9, S11 and S13) during this procedure is informed of the memory means 32, 44 of the ink cartridge 1, 2 by the data reading and writing means 50, and stored in the ink cartridges 1, 2 in a rewritten manner, so as to be effectively used in future recycling of the ink cartridge.

[0044] According to this ink cartridge and recording apparatus described above, a main cause of abnormal state which continuously requires the recovery operation is precisely informed of the operator by the display section, so that the operator can rapidly and correctly execute the operation for solving the problem.

[0045] Further, the effective countermeasure as described above makes it possible to eliminate operation error and damage of the recording apparatus caused by the ink cartridge.

[0046] As the display means, the display members 9 and 10 disposed in the case 3 are used, however, the indication and the alarm may be conducted on a host computer connected to the recording apparatus. In this case, more detailed data can be displayed than that in

the display member of the recording apparatus, and can be also informed by voice.

[0047] As another informing method, the data to be informed may be printed on a paper medium. This method can be utilized in case that there is no display member, and even in case that there is a display member, this method can inform more detailed data.

[0048] Further, the informed data is stored in the memory means 60 of the recording apparatus for a predetermined period, whereby it can be utilized as the data for exchanging the cartridge by taking out the stored data according to the circumstances.

[0049] Further, a recording apparatus using an on-carriage type ink cartridge, which mounts an ink cartridge on a carriage, has been described as a recording apparatus. However, the invention can be applied to a recording apparatus using an off-carriage type ink cartridge, in which an ink cartridge is attached to a main body, i.e. a portion other than a carriage, of the apparatus, and ink is supplied to a recording head by a tube.

[0050] Effects of the above-described invention is as follows:

[0051] A main cause of problem on the recording operation due to the ink cartridge mounted on the recording apparatus can be recognized precisely, so that the corresponding operation for solving the problem can be rapidly executed.

[0052] Further, damage of the recording apparatus caused by the ink cartridge can be eliminated preliminarily.

Claims

1. A recording apparatus comprising an ink cartridge provided with memory means that stores data relating to the ink cartridge, and a recording head that performs a recording operation with ink supplied from the ink cartridge, wherein
 control means is provided, which reads, writes and rewrites the data stored in the memory means of said ink cartridge, whereby in case that abnormality has occurred in the recording apparatus, information can be notified based on the data stored in the memory means of said ink cartridge.
2. The recording apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said data is indicative of a manufacturing year and a manufacturing month of the ink cartridge; a period elapsed from said manufacturing year and manufacturing month is calculated in case that the abnormality has occurred in the recording apparatus; and in case that the elapsed period exceeds an effective period of use, the information that the elapsed period exceeds the effective period of use can be notified.
3. The recording apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said data is indicative of a mounting year and a mounting month of the ink cartridge which the recording apparatus wrote in the memory means of the ink cartridge when the ink cartridge was mounted to the recording apparatus; a period elapsed from said mounting year and mounting month is calculated in case that the abnormality has occurred in the recording apparatus; and in case that the elapsed period exceeds an effective period of use, the information that the elapsed period exceeds an effective period of use can be notified.
4. The recording apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said data is indicative of a kind of the ink cartridge; whether or not said data indicative of the kind of ink cartridge can be used in the recording apparatus is judged; and in case that it cannot be used, an operation of the recording apparatus is stopped and the information that the ink cartridge cannot be used can be notified.
5. The recording apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said data is indicative of a destination of the ink cartridge; whether or not said data indicative of the destination of the ink cartridge is suitable for the recording apparatus is judged in case that abnormality has occurred in the recording apparatus; and in case that it is not suitable, the information that the ink cartridge is not suitable for use with the recording apparatus can be notified to a user.
6. An ink cartridge which stores ink to be supplied to a recording apparatus therein and includes memory means in which data relating to the ink cartridge is stored, wherein
 said memory means can be read, written and rewritten by the recording apparatus, and can transmit the data stored in the memory means to the recording apparatus when abnormality occurs in said recording apparatus.
7. The ink cartridge according to Claim 6, wherein said data is indicative of a manufacturing year and month of the ink cartridge.
8. The ink cartridge according to claim 6, wherein said data is indicative of a year and month when the ink cartridge was mounted to the recording apparatus.
9. The ink cartridge according to Claim 6, wherein said data is indicative of a kind of the ink cartridge.
10. The ink cartridge according to Claim 6, wherein said data is indicative of a destination of the ink cartridge.

FIG. 1

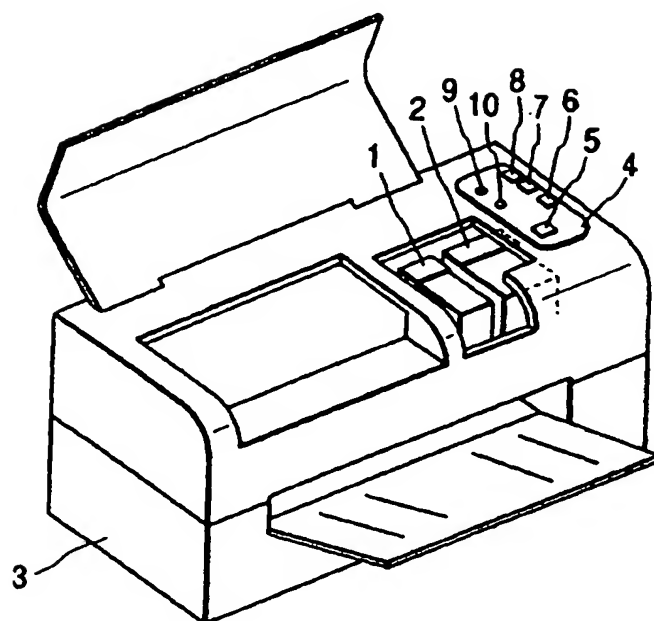


FIG. 2

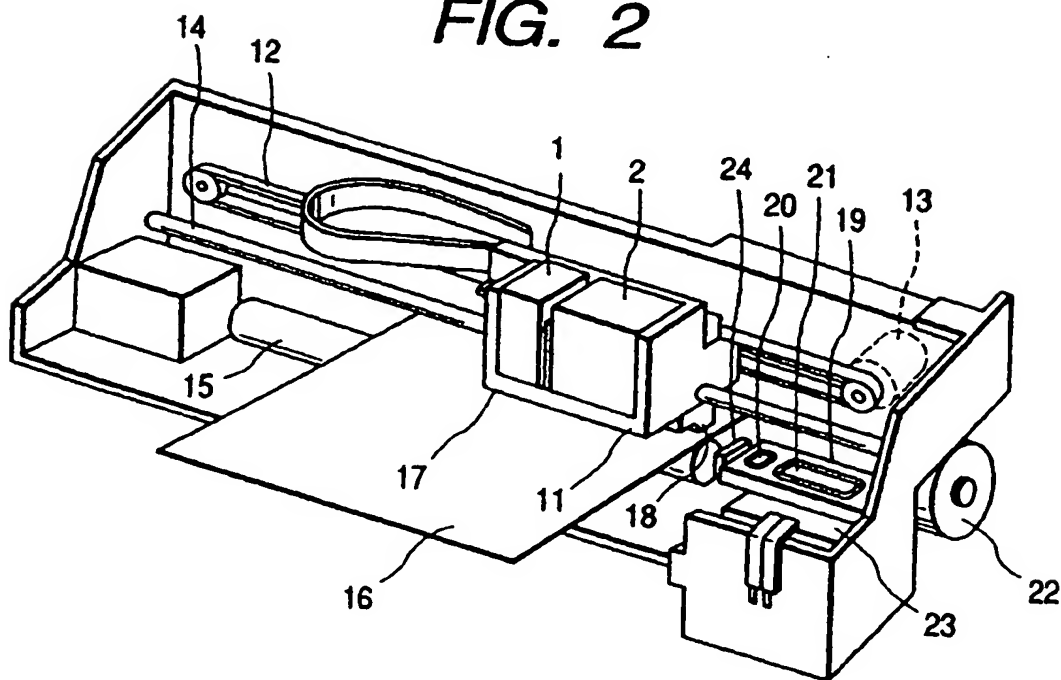


FIG. 3A

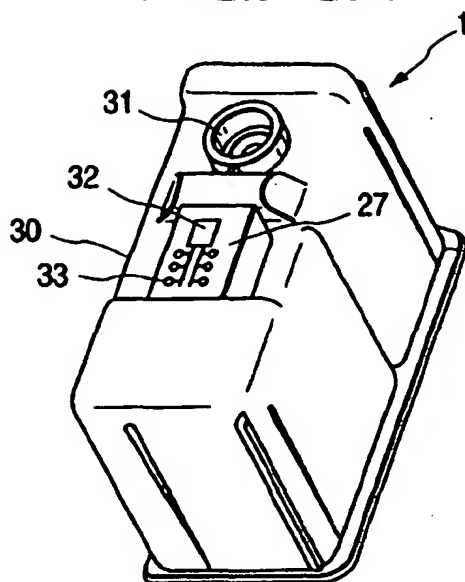


FIG. 3B

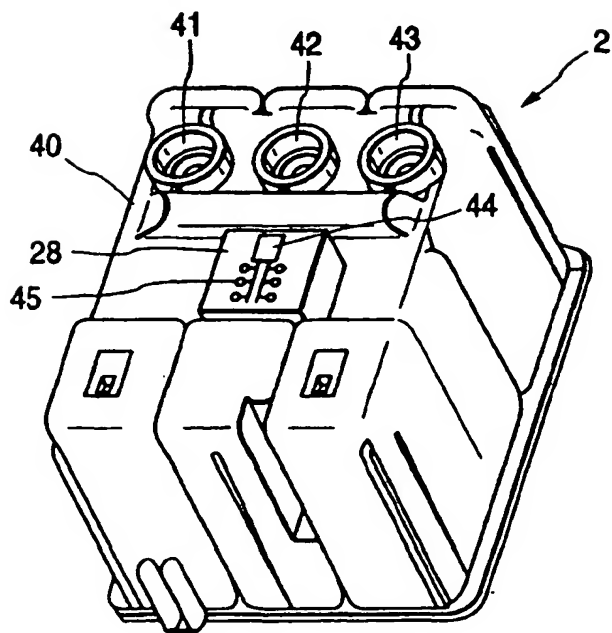


FIG. 4

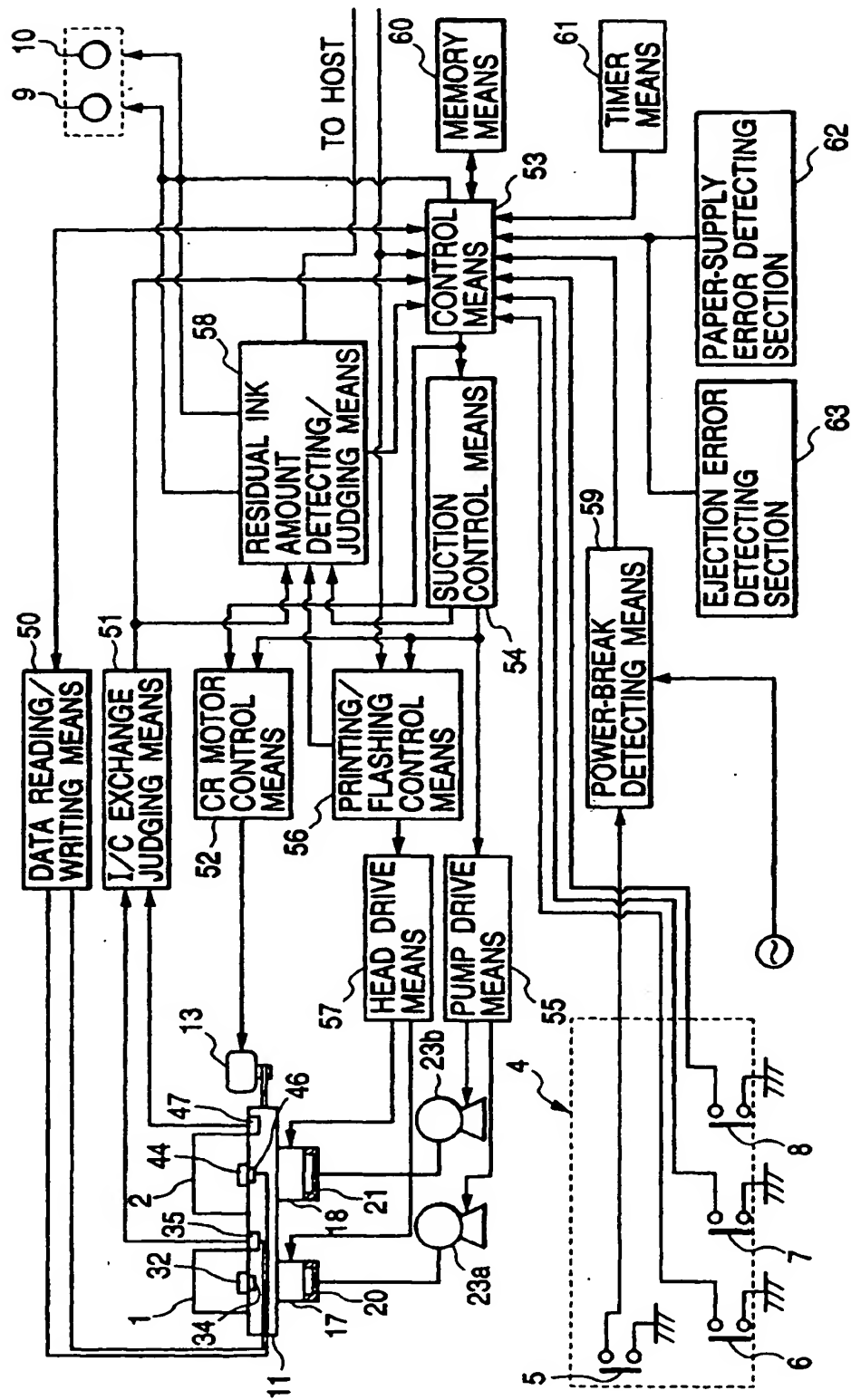


FIG. 5

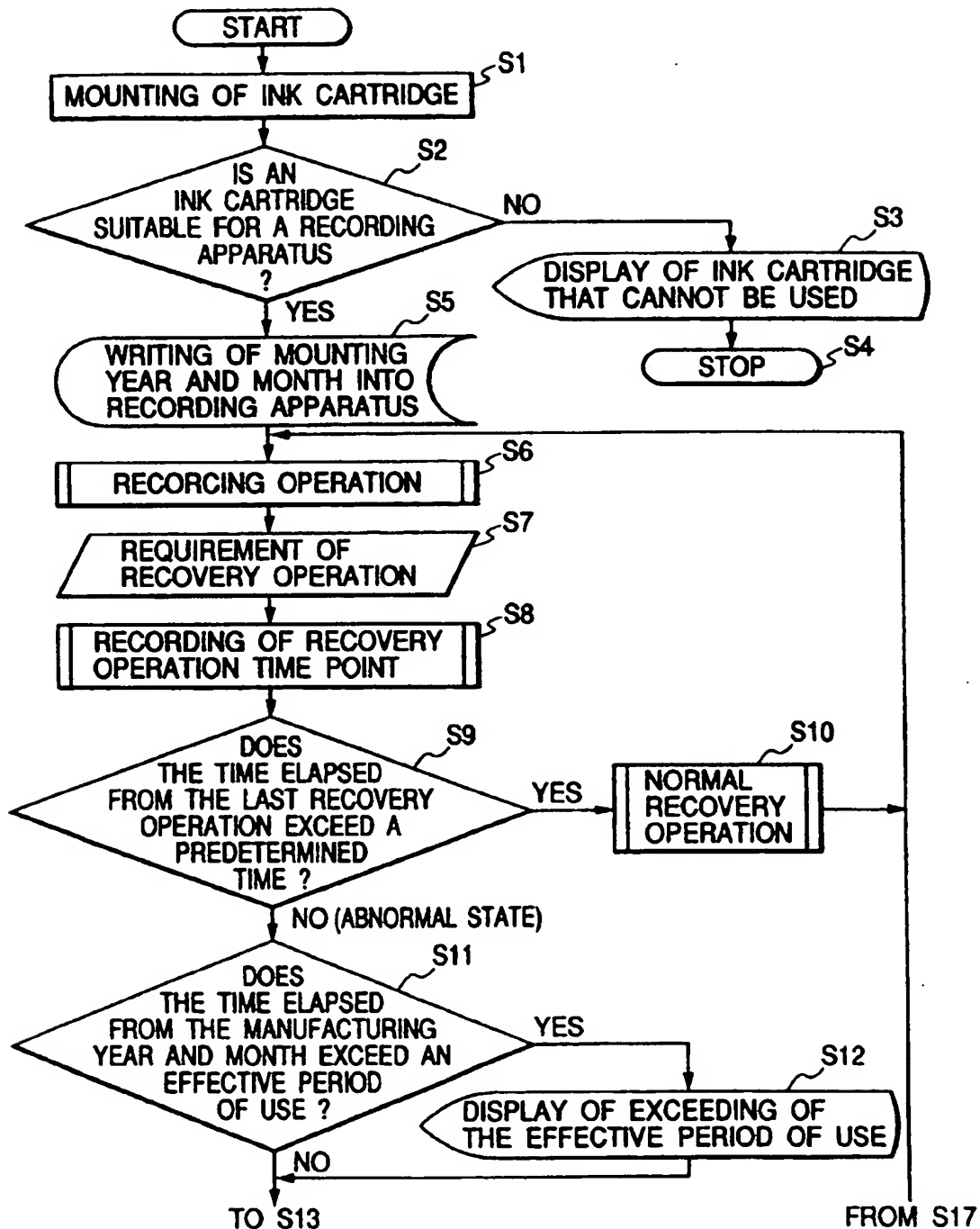
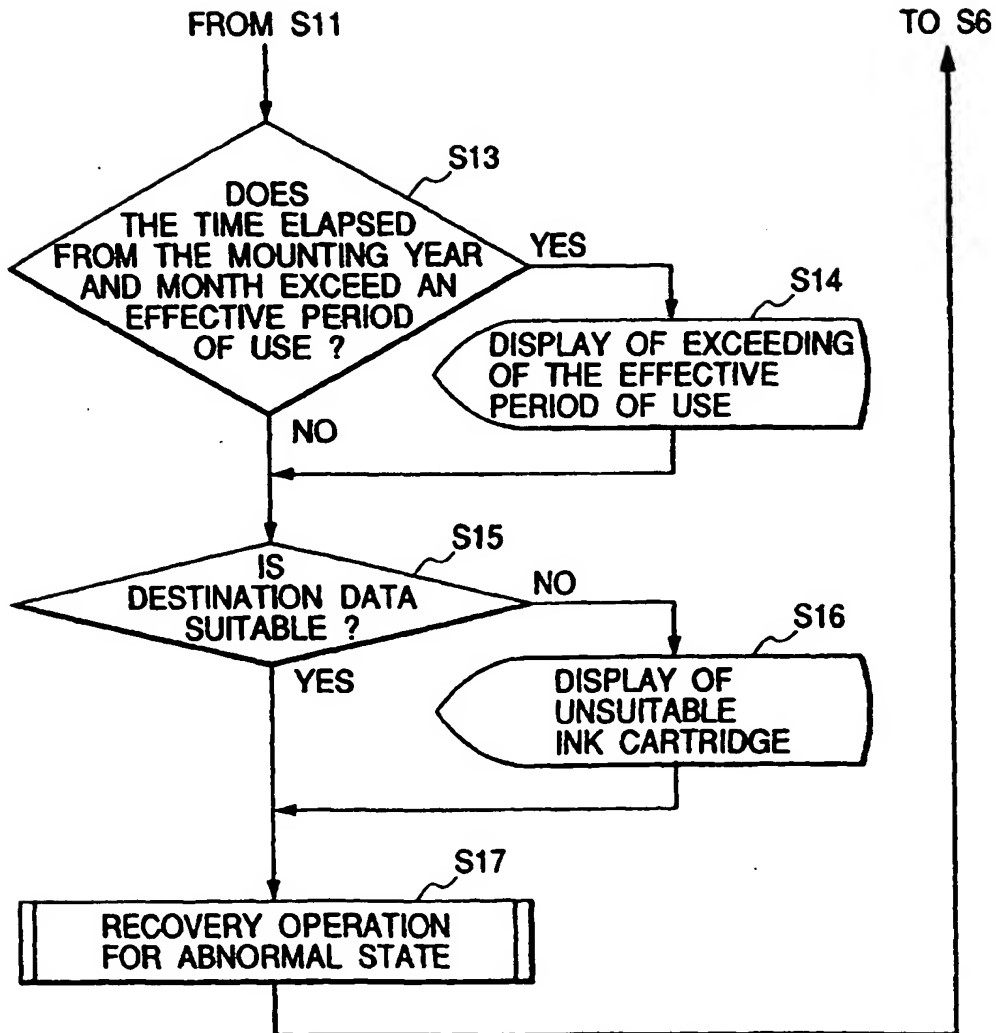


FIG. 6



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.:

PCT/JP99/05002

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER Int.Cl. ⁶ B41J2/175		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) Int.Cl. ⁶ B41J2/175		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1922-1966 Toroku Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1994-1999 Kokai Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1971-1999 Jitsuyo Shinan Toroku Koho 1996-1999		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	JP, 6-320732, A (Canon Inc.), 22 November, 1994 (22.11.94), page 11, left column, line 9 to page 12, right column, line 24	1,3,6,8
Y	page 11, left column, line 9 to page 12, right column, line 24 (Family: none)	2,4,5,7,9,10
X	JP, 4-275156, A (Tokyo Electric Co., Ltd.), 30 September, 1992 (30.09.92), Full text; all drawings (Family: none)	1,6
Y	JP, 4-250066, A (Canon Inc.), 04 September, 1992 (04.09.92), page 23, left column, line 15 to page 24, right column, line 5 (Family: none)	2-4,7-9
Y	JP, 5-169670, A (Canon Inc.) 9 July, 1993 (09.07.93) page 3, right column, lines 26-44 (Family: none)	4,5,9,10
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex.		
* Special categories of cited documents: "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art "&" document member of the same patent family		
Date of the actual completion of the international search 06 December, 1999 (06.12.99)		Date of mailing of the international search report 14 December, 1999 (14.12.99)
Name and mailing address of the ISA/ Japanese Patent Office Facsimile No.		Authorized officer Telephone No.

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 1992)

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP99/05002

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
EY	JP, 11-240185, A (KONICA CORPORATION), 07 September, 1999 (07.09.99), page 7, left column, lines 33-36 (Family: none)	1, 2, 6, 7

Form PCT/ISA/210 (continuation of second sheet) (July 1992)